Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 15, 1987; Designation List 198
LP-1369

PLYMOUTH THEATER, first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 234-240 West 45th Street, Manhattan. Built 1917-18; architect, Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1016, Lot 51.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Plymouth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, the upper part of the stage house; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling, and floor surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 65). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-one witnesses spoke or had statements read into the record in favor of designation. Two witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The owner was among those speaking in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Plymouth Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1917-18, the Plymouth was one of a pair with the Broadhurst and among the numerous theaters constructed by the Shubert Organization, to the designs of Herbert J. Krapp, that typified the development of the Times Square/Broadway theater district.

From its opening, the theater was leased and successfully managed by producer Arthur Hopkins. By all accounts, Arthur M. Hopkins was among the most unusual producers on the Broadway stage. A pioneer in the production on Broadway of Ibsen plays, he was the producer of Anna Christie, Eugene O'Neill's first financial success, and the friend and producer of the Barrymores (he was responsible for John Barrymore's most celebrated appearance in Hamlet). Known as "the Sphinx of Forty-fifth Street," Hopkins was identified with the Plymouth, and vice-versa, from the theater's opening in 1917 until his death in 1950.

Founded by the three brothers Sam S., Lee and J.J. Shubert, the Shubert organization was the dominant shaper of New York's theater district. Beginning as producers, the brothers expanded into the building of theaters as well, and eventually helped cover the blocks east and west of Broadway in Midtown with playhouses.

Herbert J. Krapp, who designed almost all the Shuberts' post-World War I theaters, was the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district. Having worked in the offices of Herts & Tallant, premier theater designers of the pre-war period, Krapp went on to design theaters for the two major builders of the post-war era, the Shubert and Chanin organizations. The Plymouth and the Broadhurst were his first two independent theater designs.

The Plymouth Theater represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Beyond its historical importance, the Plymouth has a handsome Adamesque style interior design, typical of the many theater designs with which Herbert Krapp adorned the Broadway theater district.

For half a century, beginning with the productions of Arthur Hopkins, the Plymouth Theater interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The development of the Broadway Theater District

The area of midtown Manhattan known today as the Broadway theater district encompasses the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in the world. The theaters located there, some dating from the turn of the century, are significant for their contributions to the history of the New York stage, for their influence upon American theater as a whole, and in many cases for their architectural design.

The development of the area around Times Square as New York's theater district at the end of the 19th century occurred as a result of two related factors: the northward movement of the population of Manhattan Island (abetted by the growth of several forms of mass transportation), and the expansion of New York's role in American theater. The northward movement of Manhattan's residential, commercial, and entertainment districts had been occurring at a steady rate throughout the 19th century. In the early 1800s, businesses, stores, hotels, and places of amusement had clustered together in the vicinity of lower Broadway. As New York's various businesses moved north, they began to isolate themselves in more or less separate areas: the financial institutions remained downtown; the major retail stores situated themselves on Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets, eventually moving to Herald Square and Fifth Avenue at the turn of the century; the hotels, originally located near the stores and theaters, began to congregate around major transportation centers such as Grand Central Terminal or on the newly fashionable Fifth Avenue; while the mansions of the wealthy spread farther north on Fifth Avenue, as did such objects of their beneficence as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. [1]

The theater district, which had existed in the midst of stores, hotels, and other businesses along lower Broadway for most of the 19th century, spread northward in stages, stopping for a time at Union Square, then Madison Square, then Herald Square. By the last two decades of the 19th century, far-sighted theater managers had begun to extend the theater district even farther north along Broadway, until they had reached the area that was then known as Long Acre Square and is today called Times Square.

A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square had by the turn of the century evolved into a hub of mass transportation. A horsecar line had run across 42nd Street as early as the 1860s, and in 1871, with the opening of Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways, it was comparatively simple for both New Yorkers and out-of-towners to reach Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to play a large part in the development of the area; in 1904 New York's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at 42nd Street and Broadway. The area was then renamed Times Square in honor of the newly erected Times Building.[2] The evolution of the Times Square area as a center of Manhattan's various mass transit systems made it a natural choice for the location of legitimate playhouses, which needed to be easily accessible to their audiences.

The theater business that invaded Long Acre Square at the end of the 19th century consisted of far more than a few playhouses, for at that time New York was the starting-point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex theater operation had its beginnings in the 1860s when the traditional method of running a theater, the stock system, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring "combination" shows. In contrast to the stock system, in which a theater manager engaged a company of actors for a season and presented them in a variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show which toured from city to city, providing its own scenery, costumes, and sometimes musical accompaniment. Helped by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the Civil War, the combination system soon killed off the majority of stock companies.[3] By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.[4]

Of crucial importance to the operation of the combination system was a single location where combination shows could be cast, rehearsed, tried out, and then booked for a cross-country tour. Since New York was already regarded as the most important theater city in America, it is not surprising that it became the headquarters for the combination system. In addition to the many theaters needed for an initial Broadway production for the combinations before they went on tour, New York's theater district encompassed rehearsal halls, the headquarters of scenery, costume, lighting, and makeup companies, offices of theatrical agents and producers, theatrical printers and newspapers, and other auxiliary enterprises. Close to the theater district were boarding houses catering to the hundreds of performers who came to New York in the hope of being hired for a touring show or a Broadway production.

As theaters were built farther uptown, the auxiliary enterprises also began to move north. By the turn of the century,

> the section of Broadway between 37th Street and 42nd Street was known as the Rialto. Theater people gathered or promenaded there. Producers could sometimes cast a play by looking over the actors loitering on the Rialto; and out-of-town managers, gazing out of office windows, could book tours by seeing who was available.[5]

The theater district that began to move north to Long Acre Square in the 1890s was thus a vast array of business enterprises devoted to every facet of theatrical production.

The movement of the theater district north along Broadway had proceeded at a steady pace during the latter part of the 19th century. The Casino Theater was opened on the southeast corner of Broadway and 39th Street in 1882. A year later, it was joined by a most ambitious undertaking--the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets. In 1888, the Broadway Theater was erected on the southwest corner of Broadway and 41st Street. Five years later, the American Theater opened its doors at Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, as did Abbey's Theater at Broadway and 38th Street and the Empire Theater at Broadway and Fortieth Street.

It remained for Oscar Hammerstein I to make the move into Long Acre Square itself. At the close of the 19th century, Long Acre Square housed Manhattan's harness and carriage businesses, but was little used at night, when it seems to have become a "thieves' lair."[6] In 1895 Hammerstein erected an enormous theater building on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets. The original plan for the Olympia called for a "perfect palace of entertainment--which would have included three theaters, a bowling alley, a turkish bath, cafes and restaurants."[7] Only part of this visionary plan ever became a reality. On November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building, and a little over three weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall section. Never a financial success, the Olympia closed its doors two years after it opened. Nevertheless, it earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."

By the turn of the century Hammerstein had built two more theaters in the Long Acre Square area, and in the years 1901-1920 a total of forty-three additional theaters appeared in midtown Manhattan, most of them in the side streets east and west of Broadway. Much of this theater-building activity was inspired by the competition between two major forces in the industry, the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers, for control of the road. As each side in the rivalry drew its net more tightly around the playhouses it owned or controlled, the other side was forced to build new theaters to house its attractions. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of playhouses, both in New York and across the country. After World War I, as the road declined and New York's theatrical activity increased, the general economic prosperity made possible the construction of thirty additional playhouses in the Times Square area, expanding the boundaries of the theater district so that it stretched from west of Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue, and from 39th Street to Columbus Circle.[8]

The stockmarket crash of 1929 and the resulting Depression caused a shrinkage in theater activity. Some playhouses were torn down, many were converted to motion picture houses, and later to radio and television studios. From the time of the Depression until the 1960s no new Broadway playhouses were constructed. Fortunately, the theaters that survive from the early part of the century represent a cross-section of types and styles, and share among them a good deal of New York's rich theatrical history.

(MMK)

Evolution of Theater Design

The frenzy of theater construction that occurred in New York during the first thirty years of this century brought with it an evolution in architecture and decoration.[9] At the close of the 19th century American theaters were still being built in the style of traditional European opera houses, with high proscenium arches, narrow auditoriums, two or three balconies built in a horseshoe configuration, and dozens of boxes, some set into the front of the first balcony. Although contemporary notices of the theaters attributed specific (though often vague) styles or periods to them, their interiors were more often than not a melange of styles and colors.

With the increase of theater construction after the turn of the century came a new attitude toward theater architecture and decoration as firms such as Herts and Tallant, Thomas W. Lamb, and others, began to plan the playhouse's exterior and interior as a single, integrated design. The Art Nouveau style New Amsterdam Theater, which opened in 1903, signalled this new seriousness in theater design.

Perhaps influenced by such European experiments as Wagner's Festival Theater at Bayreuth, American theater architects after the turn of the century began to structure their playhouses along different lines. Proscenium openings were made lower and wider, auditoriums were made shallower, seating was planned in a fan shape, and the number of balconies was usually reduced to one. Boxes were cut back to a minimum. The theaters that were built just before and after World War I for the most part shared this new configuration.

Because many of New York's extant playhouses were built during the period in which New York was serving as the starting-point for nationwide tours, they represent a style of theater architecture that is characteristic not only of New York but also of other cities across the United States, for a show which was originally produced in a New York theater would require similar conditions in the theaters in which it toured, and theater owners often hired the same architects to design and build theaters in several cities. Thus, New York's theaters set the standard for theater construction across the United States, as an inspection of designs for theaters in various cities will show.[10]

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The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

The playhouses still standing in the Broadway theater district share among them over eighty years of American theatrical history. In the early years of the century, when American theater was still heavily influenced by Europe, the theaters played host to such great international stars as Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and to adaptations of such European successes as The Merry Widow and Floradora.

It was in the Broadway theaters that the beginnings of a distinctly American drama could be seen in the Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Langdon Mitchell, and the problem plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. With the rise of the "little theater" movement in the second decade of the century, it seemed that theatrical leadership had passed from Broadway to such experimental "art" theaters as the Provincetown Playhouse and the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before long, however, the innovations of the little theaters infused Broadway with new life. Beginning with the production of Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon, on Broadway in 1920, the playhouses of Broadway presented the work of a new generation of playwrights, including, in addition to O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly and Elmer Rice.

The Depression of the 1930s brought with it a new concern with political and social issues, and the dramas presented in the Broadway playhouses reflected that concern. Commercial producers gave us plays by Lillian Hellman, Robert E. Sherwood, and Thornton Wilder, while the Group Theater and other new organizations introduced such writers as Clifford Odets and Sidney Kingsley. The Broadway theaters continued to house challenging plays during the 1940s and 1950s, when new talents such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge first began writing for the theater.

Meanwhile, musical comedy had blossomed from the adaptations and imitations of European operetta popular at the turn of the century to a uniquely American art form. By the 1940s and 1950s the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and many others, were being exported from the stages of Broadway to theaters around the world.

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of ferment and change, both in and out of the theater. As in the 1920s, the impetus for theatrical experimentation came from outside of Broadway, and as in the 1920s, the experimentation helped to revitalize the Broadway theater. Today, the playhouses of Broadway are showcases for the best plays of the Off- and Off-Off Broadway theaters, as well as for exciting productions from theatrical workshops, regional theaters, and outstanding foreign companies.

Having moved gradually northward all during the 19th century, New York's theater district finally came to rest at Times Square, where it has remained for almost ninety years. The economic Depression of the 1930s discouraged speculative ventures such as the construction of new theaters, while after prosperity returned in the wake of World War II, the cost of renting land and constructing a theater was prohibitively high. The

northward movement of the theater district may also have been discouraged for a number of years by the existence of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway, which crossed from Sixth to Ninth Avenues at 53rd Street, thereby providing a natural northern boundary for the theater district.[11]

The Plymouth Theater Interior, as one of the Broadway theater interiors surviving today in the theater district, contributes to the totality of the district's history by virtue of its participation in that history.

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Notes

1. The discussion of the northward movement of Manhattan's business and theaters is based on Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973), pp. 130-131, 168-170.

2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads: the Story of Times Square (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York: A Chronological and Documentary History 1524-1970 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), p. 34 ff.; The New York Subway (New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.).

3. Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business of the Theatre (New York: Actors Equity Association, 1932; reprint ed., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 26.

4. Jack Poggi, Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 6.

5. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.

6. Philip Paneth, Times Square, Crossroads of the World (New York: Living Books, 1965), p. 20.

7. Henderson, p. 263.

8. Henderson, p. 195-196.

9. The discussion of the developments in American theater architecture is based upon: Ned A. Bowman, "American Theatre Architecture: the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature," The American Theatre: The Sum of its Parts (New York: French, 1972), pp. 199-233; Burr C. Cook, "Twenty Years of Theatre Building," Theatre, 36 (August 1922), 98-99; Arthur S. Meloy, Theatres and Picture Houses (New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916), p. 29.

10. See, for example, the discussion of various theaters in Randolph Williams Sexton and Ben Franklin Betts, eds., American Theaters of Today, 2 vols. (New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977).

11. Stanley Buder, "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

The Shuberts

Sam S. Shubert (d.1905), Lee Shubert (c.1873-1953), and Jacob J. Shubert (c.1877-1963) formed perhaps the most powerful family Broadway has ever seen. Children of an immigrant peddlar from Czarist Lithuania,[1] the Shuberts rose to become the dominant force in legitimate theater in America. By 1924 they were producing 25 percent of all the plays in America, and controlled 75 percent of the theater tickets sold in this country.[2]

The Shuberts' career in the theater actually began in front of a theater: Lee Shubert sold newspapers outside Wieting's Opera House in Syracuse. Soon his brother Sam began to help him. The manager of Wieting's then made Lee his personal errand boy. Sam Shubert was the first in the family actually to work in a theater: soon after his brother's promotion to errand boy he was given a small role in a Belasco production at Wieting's. Belasco was to remain Sam Shubert's idol throughout his career.[3]

Sam Shubert was the driving force behind the family's rise in the theater industry. From a first job as program boy at the Bastable Theater in Syracuse, he moved to Syracuse's Grand Opera House as assistant treasurer (ticket seller) and then treasurer. At eighteen he returned to Wieting's Opera House as treasurer.[4] In 1894 he assembled enough money to buy the road rights of Charles Hoyt's A Texas Steer, and took the play on a tour of inexpensive houses. The tour was a success and the next season he repeated it with Hoyt's A Stranger in New York.[5] In 1897 the Shuberts used the money of local backers to build their own theater in Syracuse, the Baker, with Jacob Shubert serving as manager.

Their success upstate convinced the Shuberts that they were ready to enter the theater world in New York City. In 1900 Sam and Lee Shubert obtained the lease of New York City's Herald Square Theater at Broadway and 35th Street (demolished 1915), while Jacob managed their upstate business. The Herald Square Theater at that time was unpopular with theatergoers, but the Shuberts changed that with a successful production of Arizona by Augustus John. They proceeded to engage the well-known actor Richard Mansfield, and he appeared at the Herald Square in 1901 in a popular production of Monsieur Beaucaire.[6] The success of these productions encouraged the Shuberts to expand their activities in New York City. In 1901 Sam Shubert leased the Casino Theater on 39th Street; he secured the American rights to the London hit A Chinese Honeymoon and in 1902 it opened at the Casino to rave revues. The show ran for more than a year, and three companies presented it on the road.[7]

The Shuberts followed the success of A Chinese Honeymoon with further expansion in New York City. In 1902 they acquired the lease of the old Theater Comique on 29th Street and Broadway, remodeled the interior and

reopened it as the Princess. As an opening attraction they brought Weedon Grossmith and his English company to America in their popular production of The Night of the Party. The following year, 1903, the Shuberts leased the New Waldorf Theater in London and the Madison Square Theater in New York City. They also sold a property on 42nd Street to the composer Reginald DeKoven, who built the Lyric Theater there as a home for the American School of Opera and leased it back to the Shuberts.[8] The Shuberts then signed a ten-year agreement with Richard Mansfield to open each season at the Lyric, to be followed by DeKoven's productions with the American School of Opera.

By this time the Shuberts were outgrowing the financial means of their upstate backers. Lee Shubert found two new financial backers, Samuel Untermyer and Andrew Freedman. Untermyer was a New York attorney with connections to many New York bankers and investors. Freedman was the owner of the New York Giants baseball team, had extensive New York real estate holdings as well as associations with the Morgan Bank, and was among the small group building New York's first subway. With the political influence and capital made available to the Shuberts by Untermyer and Freedman, they were able to expand their theater holdings in cities across the country, including Chicago, Boston, New Haven, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

By 1905 the Shuberts controlled thirteen theaters. They had also found two additional backers who enabled the growing Shubert empire to expand still further, George B. Cox of Ohio and Joseph L. Rhinock of Kentucky. Cox was the immensely wealthy political boss of Cincinnati and Rhinock was a member of Congress who had extensive race track and real estate holdings. In May of that year, however, Sam Shubert was killed in a train wreck. He had been the driving force behind the Shubert empire, and many in the theater industry thought the Shuberts' dramatic rise would now end. Lee Shubert, however, took over his brother's role and within six months of the latter's death had quadrupled the Shubert chain and planned five memorial theaters to Sam.[9]

The Shuberts' success in acquiring and building theaters across the country and in booking and producing shows brought them into conflict with the central booking agency controlled by Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger. In 1905 Klaw and Erlanger's Syndicate managed most of the roughly one thousand lucrative theaters of the approximately 3000 theaters in the country.[10] Every touring company had to pass through the Syndicate's stage doors. The Shuberts began to fight in earnest with Klaw and Erlanger in 1904 when they learned that their musical The Girl From Dixie wouldn't be able to get a road booking unless the brothers stopped renting their own theaters. Following his brother's death, Lee Shubert announced to the press that Harrison Fiske, David Belasco and the Shuberts were joining forces and were inviting "other independent producers" to join them in an "open door" independent circuit. The need for such a circuit was emphasized in November 1905 when Mme. Sarah Bernhardt arrived in New York for a Shubert tour. Klaw and Erlanger denied her the use of any of their theaters thinking that this action would force the Shuberts to accept their terms. The idea backfired and created enormous public support for the Shuberts as Mme. Bernhardt played in tents and town halls across the country. The struggle for control of theatrical bookings between the Shuberts and Klaw and Erlanger continued through the 1910s. By 1920, after countless lawsuits, the Shuberts gained supremacy.

In the five years following Sam Shubert's death the family continued to expand their holdings in New York City. In 1908 they hired Ben Marshall of Marshall & Fox, Chicago, to design a playhouse on West 39th Street. In what was to become a common Shubert practice, they named the theater after one of their stars, calling it Maxine Elliott's Theater (demolished). This was the first theater that the Shuberts built themselves, neither remodeling nor leasing an existing theater. In 1909 they were involved, along with a number of other investors, in the building of the New (later Century) Theater on Central Park West at 62nd Street (demolished). At the same time they were building a second theater of their own in New York on West 41st Street, the Comedy Theater, designed by architect D.G. Malcolm (demolished). In 1910 the Shuberts hired architect Albert Swasey to design a small playhouse on West 39th Street, named Alla Nazimova's 39th Street Theater (demolished).

During the 'teens the Shuberts continued to expand their control of New York's theaters. Lee Shubert became the business director of the Century Theater on Central Park West. There he met Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt who owned the American Horse Exchange on Broadway at West 50th Street. The Shuberts acquired the Exchange from Vanderbilt and hired Swasey to remodel it as a theater. It opened in 1911 as the Winter Garden Theater with Jacob Shubert as manager. The Shuberts also bought the Astor Theater on Broadway and 45th Street (demolished) as well as an interest in three Manhattan theaters owned by the Selwyn brothers, and continued to build their own New York theaters. In 1913 they opened two theaters designed by Henry B. Herts, the Sam S. Shubert Memorial Theater on West 44th Street and the connecting Booth Theater (with Winthrop Ames as a partner) on West 45th Street. The Shubert Theater building also became home to the family's corporate offices.

Over the following decade the Shuberts proceeded to cover the Times Square area with Shubert theaters, all designed by architect Herbert J. Krapp, formerly of the Herts & Tallant office. In 1917 three new Shubert houses opened: the Morosco on West 45th Street (demolished), named for West Coast producer Oliver Morosco; and a second adjoining pair, the Broadhurst on West 44th and the Plymouth on West 45th, just east of the Shubert-Booth pair. The Broadhurst was initially managed by playwright George Broadhurst and the Shuberts, while the Plymouth was built in partnership with producer Arthur Hopkins. In 1918 the Shuberts built the Central Theater on Broadway and 47th Street (it survives today as the Forum 47th Street movie theater).

In the 1920s the Shuberts continued their fast-paced expansion both in New York and in other cities across the country. In 1920 they acquired complete ownership of the Century Theater on Central Park West.[11] That same year, they announced plans for six new theaters on West 48th and 49th Streets, all to be designed by Herbert J. Krapp. Of the four of these theaters eventually built, three opened in 1921: the Ritz on West 48th Street, and the Ambassador and the Forty-Ninth Street (demolished) on West 49th. The Edwin Forrest (today called the Eugene O'Neill) on West 49th Street opened in 1925.

While the Shuberts were building and acquiring theaters for use as legitimate houses they were also involved in other aspects of the

entertainment business, many of them in competition with the legitimate stage. Lee Shubert at one time owned one-third of Samuel Goldwyn's motion picture company, and later sat on the boards of both Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and United Artists.[11]

The Shuberts also became involved in vaudeville. In 1910 in Syracuse the Shuberts had reached an agreement with B.F. Keith, who virtually controlled vaudeville in the East. They agreed to stay out of vaudeville for ten years in return for a share in Keith's Syracuse profits.[12] With the agreement's expiration in 1920, Lee Shubert announced plans to produce vaudeville shows, making inevitable a battle with Keith's United Booking Office (UBO) and its monopoly of the eastern vaudeville circuit. The booking battle with Keith caused intense competition for stars and control of theaters. Eventually, however, it became clear that vaudeville was no comptition for the growing popularity of motion pictures, and the Shuberts abandoned the enterprise.

In 1924 the Shuberts issued four million dollars worth of Shubert theater stock. The prospectus detailed the assets owned by the Shuberts, not the least of which was their control or ownership of 86 "first class" theaters in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and 27 other major cities. The 30 theaters they owned or controlled in New York City represented half of the seating capacity on Broadway. The Shuberts owned seven of Chicago's fifteen theaters, and they booked three of the others. They went on to announce in their prospectus that the producers who booked through their organization included the Theater Guild, Winthrop Ames, Brady, Comstock, Gest, Hopkins, Sam Harris, William Morris and 40 others. Finally the Shuberts noted that 20 percent of the total time on their circuit was devoted to their own productions.[13] The stock sold out.

In addition to the four theaters on 48th and 49th Streets announced in 1920, the Shuberts built Krapp-designed theaters throughout the Times Square area. In 1921 Jolson's 59th Street Theater opened (demolished). The Shuberts named it for Al Jolson who opened it but never appeared in it again. In 1923 they opened the Imperial Theater on West 45th Street and in 1928 the Ethel Barrymore on West 47th Street. In addition to building their own theaters, the Shuberts owned or leased at various times many other New York theaters including the Belasco, the Billy Rose (now the Nederlander), the Cort, the Forty-Fourth Street, the Harris, the Golden, the Royale and the St. James.

While the Shubert Organization continues to function today (the sole survivor among the early 20th century theater entrepreneurs), its contribution to the stock of Brodway theaters ended with the Depression. That contribution, however, was of enormous importance for the creation of the Broadway theater district, and the surviving Shubert-built theaters today bear witness to the productivity of one of the most active and influential families in American theater history.

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Notes

1. Jerry Stagg, The Brothers Shubert, (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 3.

2. Stagg, p. 217.

3. Stagg, p. 12.

4. Ibid.

5. Sam S. Shubert, obituary, New York Dramatic Mirror, May 20, 1905, p. 13.

6. Reviewed in The Theatre, January, 1902.

7. Sam S. Shubert obit., p. 13.

8. Stagg, p. 208.

9. Stagg, p. 75.

10. Stagg, p. 98.

11. Stagg, p. 165.

12. Stagg, p. 164.

13. Stagg, p. 230.

Arthur Hopkins

By all accounts, Arthur M. Hopkins was among the most unusual producers on the Broadway stage, from his first successful production in 1913 until his death in 1950.

Born in Cleveland in 1878 of Welsh immigrant parents, Hopkins, like many others of his generation, made his way into the theatrical world by way of the newspapers. He then worked his way up from early vaudeville and amusement park sketches to his first Broadway success, Poor Little Rich Girl, which opened in January 1913 and ran for 160 performances.[1] This was followed by some 80 productions over the following four decades.

Among the plays Hopkins produced during the late 'teens were three Ibsen plays: Wild Duck, Hedda Gabler, and A Doll's House, all starring the renowned actress Alla Nazimova. During the late 'teens and the 'twenties Hopkins became involved with the Barrymores. In 1918 he produced Redemption with John Barrymore, and The Jest with John and Lionel. His production with John Barrymore has been called "the best-remembered of the Richard III revivals"; and it was Hopkins who produced John in perhaps the most famous Barrymore performance of all, Hamlet.[2]

In 1921 Hopkins produced Anna Christie, for which, according to Hopkins, Eugene O'Neill received "his first substantial financial returns." Among the other careers begun or brightened by Hopkins were those of Katherine Hepburn, Pauline Lord, Clark Gable, Barbara Stanwyck, Humphrey Bogart, Robert Edmond Jones, Maxwell Anderson, and Lynn Riggs.[3]

Hopkins's contemporaries considered him to be different from most other Broadway producers -- honest, interested more in good shows than in financial success, and even "mystical" in his beliefs about the value of good theater. His reputation was extraordinary. He was described as "the most important man of our time in the American theatre,"[4] and of him it was written that he

> was a great gentleman of the American theatre. For more than thirty years the words 'Arthur Hopkins Presents' meant, almost invariably, that something new, something exciting, something great was to be shown on the New York stage."[5]

His approach to theater inspired respect; he was considered "shy, modest, sensitive, with a strong mystic streak...."[6] He wrote about his feelings for the theater:

> Art is not intended for the intellect any more than sunsets are. Art to be appreciated need not be understood.... Art's reception must be emotional. Its appraisal should be an appraisal of the emotional reaction. It is not what we think of art, but what it does to us.[7]

Hopkins's directorial methods were considered unusual and, by some, revolutionary:

> Arthur Hopkins' importance to the drama was only partly in the plays he chose and the new, young authors he sponsored. Much of his impact was in the way he staged his dramas and comedies, for he was the leader in the naturalistic school of playing which still is the essence of today's theatres. His actors were quietly conversational; they performed as though they were in a real room with four walls, with not a thought that an audience was out front.[8]

His influence was held to be enormous:

> It is not exaggerating to say that no other individual, save Eugene O'Neill, and certainly no other producer, did so much to give the American theatre dignity, importance and greatness in the days when it was coming of age. It was due chiefly to him that the stage became for the men and women of my generation the most vital cultural and emotional influence in the shaping of our general intellectual outlook.[9]

Hopkins leased the Plymouth Theater from the Shuberts even before the building had been completed, and was associated with it for the rest of his life. He maintained a small office in the building, in later years rent-

free, which served as his headquarters. His entire Broadway career came to be identified with his Plymouth Theater headquarters (he was known as "the Sphinx of Forty-fifth Street because he talked little and always to the point."[10] Shortly after his death, a number of theatrical people proposed to the Shuberts, unsuccessfully, that the Plymouth be renamed the Arthur Hopkins Theater.[11]

(AR)

Notes

1. "Hopkins, Arthur (Melancthon)," Current Biography, June, 1947, p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 36.

3. Ibid.

4. Arthur Hopkins, obituary, Daily News, March 23, 1950.

5. Arthur Hopkins, obituary, New York Times, March 23, 1950, p. 29.

6. Arthur Hopkins, obituary, Variety, March 29, 1950, pp. 68, 72.

7. Current Biography, p. 36.

8. Arthur Hopkins, obituary, Daily News.

9. Richard Watts, Jr., "The Theatre of Arthur Hopkins," New York Post, April 2, 1950.

10. Arthur Hopkins, obituary, New York Herald Tribune, March 23, 1950.

11. "Plymouth to Hopkins?," New York Herald Tribune, March 28, 1950.

Herbert J. Krapp

The character of today's Broadway theater district owes more to architect Herbert J. Krapp (1883-1973) than to any other architect. He designed sixteen of the extant Broadway theaters (almost half the total),[1] fourteen of which[2] are in active theatrical use, as well as five that have been demolished.[2] Despite his enormous output, however, little is known today of his life and work.

Herbert Krapp's career coincided with the rise of the Shubert organization as the major force in the New York theater. Upon his graduation from Cooper Union, Krapp joined the office of noted theater architects Henry Herts and Hugh Tallant, who had designed some of the handsomest early twentieth-century theaters in New York, including the Lyceum (1903), New Amsterdam (1902-03), Helen Hayes (1911, demolished), and Longacre (1912-13). According to Krapp's daughter, the partners were becoming increasingly debilitated by morphine addiction, and gradually

entrusted Krapp with responsibility for design and office operations.[3] Be that as it may, when the Shuberts next decided to build new theaters, in 1916, they turned to Krapp for designs, and proceeded to commission from him a dozen theaters in Times Square in as many years (1916-1928). Throughout his professional career Krapp remained the preferred Shubert architect. He designed their theaters in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and elsewhere, supervised Shubert theater alterations nationwide, and was even the architect for their private residences.[4]

Besides his twelve Shubert theaters, Krapp designed nine other Times Square houses. Six, built between 1924 and 1927, were for the Chanin Construction Company. Only three, the Alvin, the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan), and the Waldorf (demolished) were designed for independent interests. A brilliant acoustician and gifted architect of great invention, Krapp was responsible for scores of theaters throughout New York City and State (including three movie houses in Queens: the Sunnyside in Woodside and the Jackson and the Boulevard in Jackson Heights) and others stretching from Palm Beach to Detroit. His office records document alterations to literally hundreds of theaters across the country.

Krapp's Broadway theaters closely reflect the interest and needs of a new breed of theatrical entrepreneur, the large-scale speculative owner/builder. Prior to the rise of the Shuberts as major theater owners, most theaters had been erected for independent impresarios, including Oscar Hammerstein who built the first Times Square theater and whose Victory Theater (1899) still stands on 42nd Street, Daniel Frohman who built the Lyceum (1903), Charles Dillingham who built the Lunt-Fontanne (1910), and David Belasco and John Cort who built the theaters that bear their names (1907 and 1912). At the turn of the century, Klaw and Erlanger's Theatrical Syndicate dominated most of the Times Square theaters, but did not sponsor a unified building campaign as the Shuberts eventually did. Since the Shuberts were building theaters largely as financial ventures, most of their buildings tended to be simpler than those designed for the impresarios who were attempting to draw attention both to their theaters and to themselves. The theaters that Krapp designed for the Shuberts are relatively restrained on both the exterior and interior, but they reflect Krapp's mastery of theater layout, as well as the general stylistic trends established by the earlier and more elaborate theater designs in the Times Square theater district.

Krapp's earliest theaters, the Plymouth (1916-17) and Broadhurst (1917), were built as a pair located immediately to the west of Henry Herts's earlier Shubert pair, the Shubert and Booth. The designs of the Plymouth and Broadhurst echo those of the earlier theaters. Like the Shubert and Booth, Krapp's houses have rounded corners that face towards Broadway (the direction from which most audience members arrived). Each corner is accented by an entrance with a broken pedimented enframement and by an oval cartouche. These forms imitate, in a simplified manner, the ornamental forms on Herts's buildings. In addition, Krapp's theaters are faced with bricks separated by wide, deeply inset mortar joints in a manner favored by Herts. The Plymouth and Broadhurst facades are simpler than their neighbors, but they were clearly designed to complement Herts's theaters and create a unified group of Shubert houses.

The Plymouth and Broadhurst are not adorned with a great deal of applied stone or terra cotta. This lack of architectural ornament is typical of Krapp's designs for the Shuberts;[5] the facades of these theaters are generally enlivened by diaper-patterned brick and occasionally by the use of ornamental iron balconies. The use of diaper-patterned brick can be seen on the Plymouth and the Broadhurst, but it is most evident on the Morosco (1917, demolished), Ritz (1921), Ambassador (1921), and the 46th-Street facade of the Imperial (1923). Krapp's use of diaperwork might have been inspired by Herts & Tallant's use of an ornate diaper pattern of terra cotta on their Helen Hayes Theater (1911).

After building a large number of new theaters between 1916 and 1923 the Shuberts undertook very little construction in the Times Square area from 1924 through 1927. During these years the Chanin Construction Company emerged as the major theater builder in the area. The Chanins also turned to Krapp for their theater designs. Major New York City builders, the Chanins considered theaters to be sound financial investments from which they could not fail to profit. The six theaters that Krapp designed for the Chanins are more ornate than those he designed for the Shuberts. One reason may be that the Chanins, new to the theater world, decided that their theaters should project an elegant image; another, that as a building company, they were more concerned than the Shuberts about the exterior appearance of their buildings. Still another factor may have the greater availability of money in the middle of the 1920s as compared to the years during and immediately following World War I when most of the Shubert theaters were erected.

Krapp's first two theaters for the Chanins, the Forty-Sixth Street (1924) and the Biltmore (1925), are neo-Renaissance style structures with extensive terra-cotta detail that includes rusticated bases, monumental Corinthian pilasters, and ornate cornices and balustrades. Krapp's next commission, the Brooks Atkinson (1926), has a facade with the Mediterranean flavor that came to be favored by the Chanins. Referred to at the time as "modern Spanish" in style,[6] the Brooks Atkinson is a brick building articulated by three Palladian openings supported by twisted columns. Roundel panels and a Spanish-tiled sloping roof are additional Spanish forms on the facade. Krapp's largest commission from the Chanins was a trio of theaters, the Golden, Royale, and Majestic, all built between 1926 and 1927 in conjunction with the Lincoln Hotel (now the Milford Plaza Hotel). Like the Brooks Atkinson, these three theaters were described as being "modern Spanish in character."[7] All three were constructed of yellow brick and adorned with areas of decorative terra-cotta pilasters, twisted columns, arches, parapets, and columned loggias.[8]

Following his work for the Chanins, Krapp designed three independent houses, all of which were stylistically unusual. The Waldorf (1926, demolished) which stood on West 50th Street was an ornate French neo-Classical-style structure; the Alvin (1927, now the Neil Simon) an impressive neo-Federal style red brick building; and the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan) a neo-Gothic theater housed in a tall office building. The latter two were commissioned by theatrical impresarios, hence their more elaborate design as compared to Krapp's work for the Shubert and Chanin theater chains.

In 1928 the Shuberts commissioned their final theater from Krapp. The Ethel Barrymore is among Krapp's finest and most unusual designs. The theater is a monumentally scaled structure combining an extremely ornate rusticated Beaux-Arts-style base with a superstructure boldly modeled after the windowed facade of a Roman bath.[9]

Like the exteriors of his buildings, Krapp's interiors are stylistically varied, reflecting the design eclecticism of the first decades of the twentieth century. On many occasions the style of the interior has little to do with that of the exterior. Most of the theater interiors designed for the Shuberts have Adamesque style ornament, a style deriving from the neo-Classical designs originated by the eighteenth-century English architect Robert Adam. Krapp's Adamesque interiors display the refined, elegant forms common to the style, and such features as delicate garlands, rosettes, and foliate bands. The "Spanish" theaters that Krapp designed for the Chanins have interior details such as twisted columns, arcades, and escutcheons that match the style of the exteriors. All of Krapp's interiors were designed to create a relaxing and comfortable environment for the theatergoer. The decor of the auditoriums is simple yet elegant, and generally complemented by similarly designed lobbies and lounges.

Although Krapp lived to the age of 86, he apparently designed no theaters during the last forty years of his life. Because of the theater glut caused by financial problems during the Depression, theaters ceased being a lucrative architectural specialty. Krapp survived as a building assessor for the City of New York, and turned increasingly to industrial design. A twentieth-century Renaissance man, he supplemented his architectural practice with the patterning of silver- and flatware and especially with his design of mechanical couplings.[10] The theaters he designed in the early decades of this century, however, remain a lasting legacy, and many of his buildings, such as the Majestic, Imperial, Plymouth, and 46th Street Theaters, are counted among the most successful and sought-after on Broadway.

(ASD)

Notes

1. Krapp's sixteen theaters are the Alvin (now the Neil Simon), Ambassador, Brooks Atkinson, Ethel Barrymore, Biltmore, Broadhurst, 46th Street, Golden, Imperial, Majestic, Eugene O'Neil, Plymouth, Ritz, Royale, and Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein). The Central (1567 Broadway at 47th Street) is now a movie house and all but its cornice is covered with billboards.

2. The five theaters designed by Krapp that have been demolished are the Bijou (209 West 45th Street), Century (932 Seventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets), 49th Street (235 West 49th Street), Morosco (217 West 45th Street), and Waldorf (116 West 50th Street).

3. Interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson, Herbert Krapp's daughter, by Janet Adams, November 16, 1984.

4. Herbert Krapp papers, currently in the possession of Mrs. Peggy Elson, New York City.

5. The 49th Street Theater (1921) was an exception. This building had a terra-cotta facade articulated by fluted pilasters.

6. Brooks Atkinson Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication (as Mansfield Theater), Feburary 15, 1926, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center branch, New York Public Library.

7. Royale Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication, January 11, 1927, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection.

8. The use of restricted areas of very ornate detail set against an otherwise unornamented facade is reminiscent of Spanish Baroque or Churrigueresque architecture.

9. This theater is often overlooked because the present rectilinear marquee cuts the facade in half, hiding the ornate base and destroying the subtle juxtaposition between the top and bottom sections of the building.

10. Herbert Krapp papers, and interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson.

The Plymouth Theater

With the success of the Shubert and the Booth Theaters, completed in 1914, the Shubert organization determined to build another pair of theaters, immediately adjoining the earlier pair, on land leased from the William W. Astor estate.[1] The Shuberts leased out both theaters almost immediately, the Broadhurst to playwright George Broadhurst, and the Plymouth to Arthur Hopkins. Hopkins retained the right to name the theater, but the names of Lee and Jacob Shubert had to appear on the theater and on programmes as the owners (they also reserved a lower stage box for themselves).[2]

As noted by the New York Times in its review of opening night:

> The new house is immediately west of the Booth, in Forty-fifth Street, being of the group which includes the Booth, the Broadhurst, and the Shubert. Its completion makes this section one of the city's most important theatrical centres, with eight playhouses within a radius of a few hundred feet.[3]

The two pairs of theaters are similar in many respects, for to some degree the Shuberts built them for the same purposes. The Shubert Theater was built as a memorial to Sam S. Shubert, hence its elaborate treatment. The more modest Booth was turned over to producer Winthrop Ames, much as the Plymouth was leased to Arthur Hopkins and the Broadhurst to George Broadhurst. The similarities in design also reflect a common architectural experience. The Plymouth and Broadhurst were the first independent theater

commissions of Herbert Krapp, but he had probably also been involved, while in the employ of Henry Herts, to a greater or lesser degree in the design of the Booth and Shubert.

The Plymouth and Broadhurst pair mimic the configuration of the adjoining Booth and Shubert. Each pair comprises two similarly designed theaters backing up on each other, one facing 44th and one 45th Street. Where the flanks of the Booth and Shubert face on Shubert Alley, the flanks of the Plymouth and Broadhurst face on a service alley. The prominent curved corners of the Plymouth and Broadhurst repeat those of the Booth and Shubert.

In the Plymouth and Broadhurst interiors, Krapp created what was to become his characteristic interior theater space. The house is an amply proportioned space, slighter wider than it is deep, with walls that curve in towards the proscenium. The single balcony is divided into two tiers by a crossover aisle. Krapp also makes use of the classically-inspired and Adamesque detail which was to become the hallmark of his theater designs.

The Adamesque style takes its name from the brothers Robert and James Adam, 18th century British architects. Robert Adam (1728-1792), following English tradition, went to Italy to study the monuments of classical antiquity, but unlike his predecessors was attracted not to the great public monuments but rather to ancient domestic buildings. He took inspiration from these works to develop a highly ornamental and refined style of low-relief plasterwork with which he adorned a succession of English town and country houses.[4]

Adam's works were equally notable for their plans: the rooms in his houses were often circular, or oval, or rectangular with curved ends. A typical Adam room might be a long rectangular hall with a curved apse at one end, with walls articulated by shallow ornamental pilasters and bands of swags, and a ceiling covered with delicate plaster fan-light shaped tracery and murals of rustic scenes.[5]

Robert Adam became quite influential in his time, and his work was widely imitated, making the "Adamesque" something of a generic 18th century style. When English architecture crossed the Atlantic with the colonists in the 18th century, versions of the Adamesque became the style of Federal America. An early 20th-century revival of interest in the Georgian and Federal periods in this country brought with it a revival of the Adamesque for interior decor.

Several early Broadway theaters were designed in the neo-Georgian or neo-Federal styles (e.g. the Little Theater, 1912, and the Henry Miller Theater, 1917-18), and their red-brick Georgian exteriors were complemented by Adamesque plasterwork ornament in their interiors. In the 1920s, the style became very popular, and was used freely, particularly by theater architects such as Herbert Krapp and Thomas Lamb, in theaters whose exteriors had nothing to do with the neo-Georgian.

The auditorium of Krapp's Plymouth Theater is a handsome adaptation of the Adamesque to the needs of a theater. Like Adam's rooms, the auditorium is a rectangle with differently shaped ends, in this case oriented towards the proscenium. Adamesque friezes with wreaths, urns, and medallions with

classical figures holding musical instruments, are used to outline all the major elements of the auditorium's configuration: the proscenium arch, the boxes, the sounding board, the ceiling, and the balcony fronts.

Describing the Plymouth interior, the New York Times noted that,

> It follows the prevailing mode in theatre building in that it is simple in design, and is finished in brown, blue, and gold.[6]

Although simple, the Plymouth interior was and remains highly effective, both ornamentally and functionally.

(AR)

Notes

1. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Permit 471-1916.

2. New York County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Libers, Liber 3069, page 475.

3. "Plymouth Theatre Opens," New York Times, October 11, 1917, p. 13.

4. This brief account of the work of Robert Adam is based on Margaret Whinney, "The Adam Style," in Home House: No. 20 Portman Square, (Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, 1969), pp. 15-17.

5. See for instance the Back Parlour of Home House, 20 Portman Square, London, designed by Robert Adam and built c.1775.

6. "Plymouth Theatre Opens."

The Plymouth as a Playhouse[1]

Arthur Hopkins opened the Plymouth on October 10, 1917 with his production of A Successful Calamity. One of the biggest hits of the previous season, it played about a month before making way for the Plymouth's first new production, the short-lived Barbara with Marie Doro. In December the theater had its first hit, The Gipsy Trial (111 performances), with Roland Young and Ernest Glendinning. Spring 1918 brought Alla Nazimova, the most famous interpreter of Ibsen of the day, in productions of The Wild Duck, Hedda Gabler and A Doll's House. In October Hopkins acted as producer and director for a dramatization of Tolstoy's Redemption, working for the first time with John Barrymore. It was by all accounts a brilliant performance on Barrymore's part and marked the beginning of a remarkable collaboration that was to produce the finest work of Barrymore's career. In 1919 this artistic partnership was expanded to

include Lionel Barrymore and his wife Gilda Varesi who starred with John Barrymore in The Jest, an Italian melodrama by Sem Benelli that pitted a huge, brutish Lionel "bounding about the stage"[2] against an effete John. According to Louis Botto, "the brilliant acting of the Barrymore brothers as deadly enemies, Robert Esmond Jones's magnificent Renaissance sets and Hopkins' direction made this one of the milestones in American theatre."[3]

The first production of the 'twenties at the Plymouth was a famous Richard III with John Barrymore. It was followed in September 1920 by Rida Johnson Young's delightful comedy Little Olde New York. Other notable productions from this period include Daddy's Gone A-Hunting (1921), regarded by some as Zoe Atkins best play, and The Old Soak (1922), a popular comedy about a lovable alcoholic and his wife. One of the most important plays of the decade, What Price Glory? debuted at the Plymouth in September 1924. Directed and produced by Hopkins, this portrait of army buddies in war-time France, starring William Boyd and Louis Wolheim, set a new standard for realism in American drama. It ran 435 performances in 1924-25. During the latter half of the 'twenties Winthrop Ames, who had successfully been reviving the work of Gilbert and Sullivan, brought long-running productions of Iolanthe and The Pirates of Penzance to the Plymouth (1926). Barbara Stanwyck was established as a star in the hugely successful Burlesque (1927), and Philip Barry's sophisticated comedy Holiday written for socialite-actress Hope Williams proved to be both a popular and critical success (1928).

Highlights of the 'thirties at the Plymouth included Elmer Rice's Counsellor-at-Law with Paul Muni (1931), Clare Kummer's Her Master's Voice with Roland Young, and Laura Hope Crews (1933) and Sampson Raphaelson's Accent on Youth with Constance Cummings (1934). Marta Abba and John Halliday played aristocratic Russian emigres working as servants in the Parisian home of an American millionaire in Tovarich of 1936, and Gertrude Lawrence gave one of her most famous performances in Susan and God of 1937. In 1938, the Plymouth had its first Pulitzer Prize winner with Robert E. Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois starring Raymond Massey.

Thornton Wilder's fantastic history of the human race, The Skin of Our Teeth, also won a Pulitzer Prize in 1942. Starring Tallulah Bankhead "as the eternal temptress and Fredric March as the inventor of the alphabet, the wheel and adultery,"[4] it went on to play 355 performances. Bankhead appeared twice more at the Plymouth during the 'forties in Jean Cocteau's The Eagle Has Two Heads of 1947 and in a famous revival of Private Lives with Donald Cook.

The 'fifties opened at the Plymouth with a major hit, Samuel Taylor's comedy The Happy Time, which starred Claude Dauphin, Kurt Kasznar and Eva Gabor and played 615 performances. In March 1952 Charles Boyer, Charles Laughton, Cedric Hardwicke and Agnes Moorehead appeared in the critically acclaimed Don Juan in Hell, excerpted from Shaw's Man and Superman. Later in 1952, the thriller Dial M for Murder with Maurice Evans and Gusti Hall held audiences in suspense for 552 performances. Other notable plays of the 'fifties included Herman Wouk's powerful The Caine Mutiny Court Martial with Henry Fonda and Lloyd Nolan (1954), Shaw's The Apple Cart with Maurice Evans and Signe Hasso (1956), Peter Ustinov's charming Romanoff and Juliet (1957), and The Marriage-Go-Round with Charles Boyer and Claudette Colbert (1959).

The 'sixties at the Plymouth began with a smash musical, Irma Las Douce, for which actress Elizabeth Seal won a Tony. Notable performances were also given by Fredric March in Paddy Chayefsky's Gideon (1961), Margaret Leighton and Anthony Quinn in Tchin-Tchin (1962), and by Alec Guinness and Kate Reid in Dylan (1964). The theater also housed three successful Neil Simon comedies, The Odd Couple (1965), Star-Spangled Girl (1966) and Plaza Suite (1968). Simon's first excursion into drama, The Gingerbread Lady, was not so well received but won a Tony for actress Maureen Stapleton.

The 'seventies were also distinguished by a number of British plays: Peter Cook and Dudley Moore starred in Good Evening, a sequel to their Beyond the Fringe, in 1973; Peter Shaffer's Equus with Anthony Hopkins won Tony Awards for best play and best director in 1974; and Simon Gray's Otherwise Engaged proved to be popular, playing 309 performances in 1977. The decade closed with the Fats Waller musical Ain't Misbehavin' which moved to the Plymouth from the Longacre for two years of its extensive run.

In the 'eighties the Plymouth has featured Jane Lapotaire's Tony Award-winning performance in Piaf (1981), the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Nicholas Nickleby (1981), Jason Robards, Jr. in a revival of You Can't Take It With You (1983), and Glenn Close and Jeremy Irons in Tom Stoppard's The Real Thing (1984). More recently Lily Tomlin has appeared in her one-woman-show, The Search for Intelligent Life in the Universe (1985) and John Mahoney and Swoosie Kurtz starred in a revival of John Guare's House of Blue Leaves.

(GH)

Notes

1. This production history of the Plymouth Theater, condensed from the fuller version in the Appendix, is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of....[annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Edwin Bronner, The Encyclopedia of American Theater, 1900-1975 (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980); Gerald Bordman, Oxford Companion to American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

2. Arthur Pollock, "Theater Time: Arthur Hopkins Inspired New Ideals in the Theater," unidentified clipping in the Arthur Hopkins Clippings File, Billy Rose Theater Collection.

3. Botto, p. 86.

4. Ibid., p. 91.

Description[1]

Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a rectangular space, wider than it is deep, with an orchestra and a single balcony; a proscenium flanked by boxes; a sounding board; an orchestra pit in front of the stage; a ceiling; an orchestra and balcony promenades; the stage opening behind the proscenium arch; and the sloping floor extending towards the proscenium arch.

Proscenium: The proscenium is elliptically-arched and splays outward.

Sounding board: There is a sounding board rising above the proscenium arch.

Balcony: There is a single balcony. Above and to the rear the balcony is spanned by a small gallery, used for technical facilities.

Boxes: At each side of the proscenium are three stepped boxes. The forward box curves toward the proscenium, while the rear box curves toward and joins the balcony front.

Staircases: At the rear of the orchestra two staircases lead up to the balcony level.

Ceiling: The auditorium ceiling is flat beyond its intersection with the sounding board.

Floor: The floor is raked.

Stage: The stage extends behind the proscenium arch and forms a stage picture (visible from the audience) framed by the proscenium arch.[2]

Orchestra Pit: The orchestra pit is placed in front of and below the level of the stage.

Promenades: Promenades are located at the rear of the orchestra and the balcony.

2) Ornament:

The decorative ornament is plasterwork in relief, which is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium. Decorative ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Proscenium arch: The splayed arch is ornamented with a wide continuous band of Adamesque design consisting of medallions and vine motifs.

Sounding board: The sounding board is adorned with circular medallions with acanthus leaf ornament. (Chandeliers are suspended from the outer medallions, see below under fixtures.) A wide band of high-relief plasterwork depicting fruited garlands rises alongside the boxes to outline the curve of the sounding board.

Orchestra: Each of the exit doors on the south wall is set in a deep reveal and has a fully articulated surround consisting of paneled pilasters with stylized elongated brackets supporting an entablature with a fluted frieze (a variation on triglyphs) and cyma recta cornice surmounted by a pediment composed of stylized console brackets flanking a shield. The side walls at this level are paneled plasterwork, and stylized pediments, like those above the exit doors, are placed over the entrance doors (from the lobby) above a continuous molding. Four paneled piers with stylized capitals support the balcony above.

Orchestra promenade: Exit doors on the rear wall are articulated like those on the side walls. The wall is paneled plasterwork. An acanthus leaf frieze and modillions define the section of the ceiling above the promenade at the rear of the auditorium. The ceiling is further articulated by an acanthus leaf molding and diamond-shaped panels with central medallions (from which are suspended chandeliers, see below under fixtures).

Boxes: The three stepped boxes are framed by an elliptical arch. Panels frame the rectangular opening beneath each box at orchestra level. (The original orchestra level boxes have been removed, see below under alterations.) Each box front is a single panel containing high-relief Adamesque ornament of acanthus leaves in arabesque forms. Below the panel is a rosette-adorned molding. The underside of each box is outlined by a molding and contains a central medallion (from which is suspended a light fixture, see below under fixtures). A pediment above each framing elliptical arch follows the curve of that arch. It contains panels like those on the box fronts flanking a medallion with a figure. Above this a segmental panel rises to a vaulted arch which in turn is linked to the sounding board spanning the ceiling.

Balcony: At balcony level the side walls are paneled; exit doors in the side walls are articulated with surrounds and stylized pediments like those at orchestra level. An Adamesque cornice spans the side walls. Towards the rear of the balcony, four paneled piers with stylized Corinthian capitals, a continuation of those at orchestra level, rise to the ceiling. The balcony front, a continuation of the arabesque panels on the box fronts, is now largely covered by a modern light box (see below under alterations). The underside of the balcony has diamond panels and circular medallions, both with Adamesque ornament (from which are suspended light fixtures, see below under fixtures).

Gallery: The gallery front is adorned with plasterwork swags.

Balcony Promenade: The wall is paneled plasterwork.

Ceiling: The ceiling is outlined by modillions, an acanthus leaf molding, and a wide Adamesque band incorporating vines in arabesque forms, cameo panels with figures of Pan and a faun, and sphinxes flanking urns.

Latticework panels contain ornamented circular medallions (from which are suspended chandeliers, see below under fixtures). The ceiling above the technical gallery is simpler with panels outlined by moldings and circular panels with central light fixtures. A frieze with sphinxes flanking urns and holding swags rises from the piers supporting the ceiling.

3) Attached fixtures:

Staircases: The two staircases at the rear of the orchestra, leading up to the balcony, have decorative metal railings.

Light fixtures: Existing non-original light fixtures throughout the auditorium are stylistically compatible with the design of the space. Their placement is described above.

4) Known alterations: Air conditioning duct covers have been inserted into the ceiling and the soffit of the balcony. A modern enclosed light box has been installed on the balcony front and a modern light truss suspended from the ceiling. A modern technical booth has been installed in the balcony gallery. The orchestra level boxes have been removed. The interior decor of the theater was redone, the surfaces repainted in a way that enhances the ornamental detail, and new light fixtures installed in 1982.

(MP)

Notes

1. This description identifies the spaces that are included in this designation. Specific elements are listed and architecturally significant features are underlined as explained in the "Guidelines for Treatment of Theater Interiors" as adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 10, 1985.

2. For the purposes of this description, the stage shall include the enclosing walls and roof of the stage house and a floor area behind the proscenium arch, but not any fixture or feature of or within that space.

Conclusion

The Plymouth Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. One of the group of theaters constructed for the Shubert Organization during the early decades of this century, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. It gains further importance through its associations with Arthur Hopkins, the prominent producer associated with the Plymouth for its first four decades. Designed for the Shuberts as one of a pair with the Broadhurst by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district, the Plymouth represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical

history and, with the Broadhurst, is the first theater that Krapp designed for the Shuberts as an independent architect. Its interior is a handsome example of the Adamesque style with which Herbert Krapp adorned most of his Broadway theaters.

For half a century, beginning with the productions of Arthur Hopkins, the Plymouth Theater Interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The preparation of this report has involved the work of a number of consultants supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (AR), Deputy Director of Research. Individual authors are noted by initials at the ends of their sections. The consultants were Margaret Knapp (MMK), Andrew Dolkart (AD), Eugenie Hoffmeyer (EH), and Peter Donhauser (PD). Gale Harris (GH) of the Research Department supplemented the research, verified the citations and sources, and provided editorial assistance. Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Virginia Kurshan, Susan Strauss, and Jay Shockley.

The New York LandmarksPreservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance rendered by many concerned citizens in studying the Broadway theaters. Special thanks are due the New York City Planning Commission; Community Planning Board 5, Manhattan; the New York Landmarks Conservancy; the Actors Equity Committee to Save the Theaters; and the individual theater owners.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Plymouth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, New York State, and the nation, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Plymouth Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1917-18, it was among the group of theaters constructed for the Shubert Organization during the early decades of this century which helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district; that it was designed as one of a pair with the Broadhurst Theater for the Shuberts by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district; that it was associated for forty years with the prominent Broadway producer Arthur Hopkins; that its interior is a handsome example of the Adamesque style which helped set the tone for Herbert Krapp's later theater designs; that its significant architectural features include its single-balcony configuration and such Adamesque style ornament as friezes of wreaths and urns, and medallions with classical figures holding musical instruments; that for half a century, beginning with Arthur Hopkins's productions, the Plymouth Theater has served as home to countless numbers of plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Article 25, Chapter 3, of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Plymouth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 234-240 West 45th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1016, Lot 51, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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APPENDIX

The following production history of the Plymouth Theater is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Gale Harris and Susan Strauss of the Research Department staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of....[annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Play Statistics File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; Programmes, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

1917

A SUCCESSFUL CALAMITY 10/10/17 (144 total perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with William Gillette, Richard Sterling, Roland Young, Estelle Winwood and William Devereaux. (Originally opened at the Booth Theater 2/5/17).

BARBARA 11/5/17 (16 perfs.) by Florence Lincoln; with Marie Doro.

THE STAR GAZER 11/26/17 (8 perfs.) by Cosmo Hamilton, lyrics by Matthew C. Woodward, music by Franz Lehar; with John T. Murray.

THE GYPSY TRAIL 12/4/17 (111 perfs.) by Robert Housum; with Roland Young, Katherine Emmett, Robert Cummings and Ernest Glendinning.

A TRENCH FANTASY (19 perfs.) with THE GYPSY TRAIL; by Percival Knight; with Percival Knight, Roland Young and Ernest Glendinning.

1918

THE WILD DUCK 3/11/18 (32 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Nazimova, Dodson Mitchell and Lionel Atwill.

HEDDA GABLER 4/8/18 (24 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Nazimova, Lionel Atwill and Charles Bryant.

A DOLL'S HOUSE 4/29/18 (32 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Nazimova, Lionel Atwill, George Probert, Katherine Emmett and Roland Young.

A VERY GOOD YOUNG MAN 8/19/18 (16 perfs.) by Martin Brown; with Ada Lewis, Louis Fletcher and Glenn Kunkel.

REDEMPTION 10/3/18 (204 perfs.) by Tolstoi; with John Barrymore, Thomas Mitchell and Helen Westley.

HAMLET 11/22/18 (several matinee perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Walter Hampden, Charles A. Stevenson, Albert Bruning, Mary Hall and Mabel Moor.

MACBETH 12/7/18 (1 perf.) by William Shakespeare; with Walter Hampden, Gilda Varesi and Albert Bruning.

1919

AS YOU LIKE IT 1/21/19 (1 perf.) by William Shakespeare; with Elsie Mackay, Allen Thomas and Henry Herbert.

THE JEST 4/9/19 (179 perfs.) by Sem Benelli, adapted by Edward Sheldon; with John Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore and Gilda Varesi.

NIGHT LODGING 12/22/19 (14 perfs.) by Maxim Gorky; with Charles Kennedy, Pauline Lord and Edward G. Robinson.

1920

THE TRAGEDY OF RICHARD III 3/6/20 (27 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with John Barrymore and Reginald Denny.

LITTLE OLD NEW YORK 9/8/20 (311 perfs.) by Rida Johnson Young; with Ernest Glendinning, Alf T. Helton and Genevieve Tobin.

1921

DADDY'S GONE A-HUNTING 8/31/21 (129 perfs.) by Zoe Akins; with Frank Conroy and Marjorie Rambeau.

THE IDLE INN 12/20/21 (25 perfs.) by Peretz Hirshbein, adapted by Isaac Goldberg and Louis Wolheim; with Joanna Roos and Edward G. Robinson.

1922

THE DELUGE 1/27/22 (45 perfs.) by Henning Berger; with Kathlene MacDonell and Edward G. Robinson.

VOLTAIRE 3/21/22 (16 perfs.) by Leila Taylor and Gertrude Purcell; with Arnold Daly and Carlotta Monterey.

THE OLD SOAK 8/22/22 (325 perfs.) by Don Marquis; with Harry Beresford, Minnie Dupree and Mary Philips.

1923

LAUNZI 10/10/23 (13 perfs.) by Ferenc Molnar; with Pauline Lord, Mary Hubbard and Edward G. Robinson.

A ROYAL FANDANGO 11/12/23 (24 perfs.) by Zoe Akins; with Ethel Barrymore, Edward G. Robinson and Spencer Tracy.

THE POTTERS 12/8/23 (245 perfs.) by J.P. McEvoy; with Catharine Calhoun Doucet, Donald Meek and Raymond Guion.

1924

WHAT PRICE GLORY 9/5/24 (435 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings; with Brian Donlevy, George Tobias, Louis Wolheim and Leyla Georgie.

1925

FIRST FLIGHT 9/17/25 (11 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings; with Rudolph Cameron and Helen Chandler.

THE BUCCANEER 10/2/25 (20 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings; with William Farnum and Estelle Winwood.

IN A GARDEN 11/16/25 (73 perfs.) by Phillip Barry; with Laurette Taylor, Frank Conroy and Louis Calhern.

1926

THE JEST 2/4/26 (78 perfs.) by Sem Bennelli; with Basil Sydney and Maude Durand.

IOLANTHE 4/19/26 (255 perfs.) by William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan; Winthrop Ames production with Adele Sanderson.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE 12/6/26 (128 perfs.) by William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan; Winthrop Ames production with William Williams, Ruth Thomas and Vera Ross.

1927

MARINERS 3/28/27 (16 perfs.) by Clemence Dane; with Pauline Lord, Arthur Wontner, Ethel Griffies and Beulah Bondi.

BURLESQUE 9/1/27 (372 perfs.) by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins; with Barbara Stanwyck, Hal Skelly and Oscar Levant.

1928

MACHINAL 9/7/28 (93 perfs.) by Sophie Treadwell; with Jean Adair, Clark Gable and Charles Kennedy.

HOLIDAY 11/26/28 (230 perfs.) by Philip Barry; with Donald Ogden Stewart, Ben Smith and Hope Williams.

1929

THE COMMODORE MARRIES 9/4/29 (37 perfs.) by Kate Parsons; with Walter Huston, Eda Heinemann and Charles D. Brown.

THE CHANNEL ROAD 10/17/29 (60 perfs.) by Alexander Woollcott and George S. Kaufman; with Anne Forrest and Siegfried Rumann.

HALF GODS 12/21/29 (17 perfs.) by Sidney Howard; with Donn Cook and Mayo Methot.

1930

REBOUND 2/3/30 (124 perfs.) by Donald Ogden Stewart; with Donald Ogden Stewart, Hope Williams, Katherine Leslie and Ada Potter.

TORCH SONG 8/27/30 (87 perfs.) by Kenyon Nicholson; with Mayo Methot and Reed Brown, Jr.

THIS IS NEW YORK 11/28/30 (59 perfs.) by Robert E. Sherwood; with Robert T. Haines, Ruth Hammond and Virginia Howell.

1931

THE WISER THEY ARE 4/6/31 (40 perfs.) by Sheridan Gibney; with Osgood Perkins and Ruth Gordon.

THE MAN ON STILTS 9/9/31 (6 perfs.) by Edwin and Albert Barber; with Harry Ellerbe.

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW 11/6/31 (397 total perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Paul Muni, Constance McKay and Anna Kostant.

1933

LATE ONE EVENING 1/9/33 (8 perfs.) by Audrey and Waveney Carten; with Ursula Jeans, John Buckler and Daisy Bellmore.

CONQUEST 2/17/33 (10 perfs.) by Arthur Hopkins; with Jane Wyatt, Raymond Hackett and Judith Anderson.

LONE VALLEY 3/10/33 (3 perfs.) by Sophie Treadwell; with Alan Baxter and Charles Kennedy.

HER MASTER'S VOICE 10/23/33 (220 perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with Roland Young, Laura Hope Crews and Frances Fuller.

1934

COME WHAT MAY 5/15/34 (24 perfs.) by Richard F. Flournoy; with Hal Skelly and Mary Philips.

LADY JANE 9/10/34 (40 perfs.) by H.M. Harwood; with Frances Starr, Frank Elliott, Frieda Inescort and Paul McGrath.

SPRING FRESHET 10/4/34 (12 perfs.) by Owen Davis; with Esther Dale, Richard Whorf, Viola Frayne and Francesca Bruning.

DARK VICTORY 11/7/34 (55 perfs.) by George Brewer and Bertram Block; with Tallulah Bankhead and Earle Larimore.

ACCENT ON YOUTH 12/25/34 (229 perfs.) by Samson Raphaelson; with Constance Cummings, Eleanor Hicks, William Carpenter and Ernest Lawford.

1935

PATHS OF GLORY 9/26/35 (24 perfs.) by Sidney Howard from a novel by Humphrey Cobb; with Ann Dere, Myron McCormick, Lee Baker and Jerome Cowan.

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL 10/31/35 (4 perfs.) by Robert Rossen; with Garson Kanin, Roy Roberts and Arlene Francis.

PRIDE & PREJUDICE 11/26/35 (219 total perfs.) by Helen Jerome from a novel by Jane Austin; with Helen Chandler, Adrianne Allen and Colin Keith Johnston. (Originally opened at the Music Box Theater 11/5/35).

1936

TOVARICH 10/15/36 (356 perfs.) by Jacques Deval, adapted by Robert E. Sherwood; with John Halliday, Marta Abba, Margaret Dale, Jay Fassett, James E. Truex and Amanda Duff.

1937

SUSAN AND GOD 10/7/37 (287 perfs.) by Rachel Crothers; with Gertrude Lawrence, Paul McGrath, Nancy Kelly, Vera Allen and Edith Atwater.

1938

ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS 10/15/38 (472 perfs.) by Robert E. Sherwood; with Raymond Massey, Adele Longmire, Howard da Silva, MurielKirkland, John Payne and Kevin McCarthy.

1939

MARGIN FOR ERROR 11/3/39 (264 total perfs.) by Clare Boothe; with Bramwell Fletcher, Sam Levene, Otto Preminger and Leif Erickson. (Moved to the Majestic Theater 4/22/40.)

1940

LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG 5/2/40 (44 perfs.) by William Saroyan; with Jessie Royce Landis, Walter Huston and Patricia Roe.

1941

THE WOOKEY 9/10/41 (134 perfs.) by Frederick Hazlett Brennan; with George Sturgeon and Edmund Gwenn.

1942

JOHNNY ON A SPOT 1/8/42 (4 perfs.) by Charles MacArthur; with Keenan Wynn, Edith Atwater and Will Geer.

SOLITAIRE 1/27/42 (23 perfs.) by John Van Druten; with Pat Hitchcock, Victor Kilian and Frederic Tozere.

GUEST IN THE HOUSE 2/24/42 (48 perfs.) by Hagar Wilde and Dale Eunson; with Mary Anderson, Leon Ames, Pert Kelton and William Prince.

VICKIE 9/22/42 (48 perfs.) by S.M. Herzig; with Uta Hagen, Jose Ferrer, Frank Conlan, Mildred Dunnock and Red Buttons.

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH 11/18/42 (355 perfs.) by Thornton Wilder; with Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, Tallulah Bankhead, Montgomery Clift, E.G. Marshall, Frances Heflin, Stanley Prager and Morton DaCosta.

1943

THE NAKED GENIUS 10/21/43 (36 perfs.) by Gypsy Rose Lee; with Joan Blondell and Phyllis Povah.

LOVERS AND FRIENDS 11/29/43 (168 perfs.) by Dodie Smith; with Raymond Massey and Katharine Cornell.

1944

A HIGHLAND FLING 4/28/44 (27 perfs.) by Margaret Curtis; with Ralph Forbes and Ivan Miller.

CHICKEN EVERY SUNDAY 6/14/44 (317 total perfs.) by Julius J. and Philip Epstein; with Mary Phillips, Guy Stockwell, Hope Emerson and Rhys Williams. (First opened at the Henry Miller Theater 4/5/44.)

1945

TEN LITTLE INDIANS 1/9/45 (425 total perfs.) by Agatha Christie; with Estelle Winwood, Harry Worth, Georgia Harvey, Patrick O'Connor and Beverly Roberts. (Originally opened at the Broadhurst Theater 6/27/44.)

THE RYAN GIRL 9/24/45 (48 perfs.) by Edmund Goulding; with Una O'Connor, Edmund Lowe and June Havoc.

THE RUGGED PATH 11/10/45 (81 perfs.) by Robert E. Sherwood; with Spencer Tracy, Merthe Sleeper, Lawrence Fletcher and Jan Sterling.

1946

LUTE SONG 2/6/46 (142 perfs.) by Sydney Howard and Will Irwin; with Mary Martin, Yul Brynner, Mildred Dunnock and Clarence Derwent.

TIDBITS OF 1946 7/8/46 (8 perfs.) by Sam Locke; with Joey Faye, Jack Diamond and Joshua Shelley.

HIDDEN HORIZON 9/16/46 (12 perfs.) by Agatha Christie; with Diana Barrymore, Peter Von Zerneck and Joy Ann Page.

OBSESSION 10/1/46 (31 perfs.) by Louis Verneuil; with Eugenie Leontovich and Basil Rathbone.

PRESENT LAUGHTER 10/29/46 (158 perfs.) by Noel Coward; with Jan Sterling, Clifton Webb and Evelyn Varden.

1947

THE EAGLE HAS TWO HEADS 3/19/47 (29 perfs.) by Jean Cocteau; with Tallulah Bankhead, Helmut Dantine and Clarence Derwent.

MESSAGE FOR MARGARET 4/16/47 (5 perfs.) by James Parish; with Mady Christians, Miriam Hopkins, Roger Pryor and Peter Cookson.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY 4/29/47 (335 perfs.) by Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden; with Lenore Lonergan, Lynne Carter and Bill Talman.

1948

JOY TO THE WORLD 3/18/48 (124 perfs.) by Allan Scott; with Alfred Drake, Marsha Hunt, Myron McCormick and Morris Carnovsky.

PRIVATE LIVES 10/4/48 (248 perfs.) by Noel Coward; with Barbara Baxley, Donald Cook, William Lanford and Tallulah Bankhead.

1949

GAYDEN 5/10/49 (7 perfs.) by Mignon and Robert McLaughlin; with Fay Bainter, Carol Wheeler and Clay Clement.

DIAMOND LIL 9/7/49 (182 total perfs.) by Mae West; with Mae West. (Originally opened at the Coronet Theater 2/5/49).

1950

THE HAPPY TIME 1/24/50 (614 perfs.) by Samuel Taylor; with Claude Dauphin, Leora Dana, Kurt Kasznar and Eva Gabor.

1951

LOVE AND LET LOVE 10/19/51 (56 perfs.) by Louis Verneuil; with Ginger Rogers, Paul McGrath and Tom Helmore.

LEGEND OF LOVERS 12/26/51 (22 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh; with Richard Burton, Hugh Griffith, Dorothy McGuire and Noel Willman.

1952

GERTIE 1/30/52 (5 perfs.) by Enid Bagnold; with Glynis Johns, Polly Rowles and Albert Dekker.

WOMEN OF TWILIGHT 3/3/52 (8 perfs.) by Sylvia Rayman; with Lorraine Clewes, Mary Merrall and Miriam Karlin.

DON JUAN IN HELL 3/30/52 (64 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Charle Boyer, Agnes Moorehead, Cedric Hardwicke, Charles Laughton.

THREE WISHES FOR JAMIE 5/27/52 (91 total perfs.) by Charles O'Neal and Abe Burrows; with John Raitt, Anne Jeffreys, Charlotte Rae and Bert Wheeler. (Originally opened at the Mark Hellinger Theater 3/21/52.)

MR. PICKWICK 9/17/52 (61 perfs.) by Stanley Young; with George Howe, Sarah Marshall, Cliver Revill and Estelle Winwood.

DIAL M FOR MURDER 10/29/52 (552 perfs.) by Frederick Knott; with Maurice Evans, Gusti Huber, Richard Derr, Anthony Dawson, John Williams and Porter Van Zandt.

1954

THE CAINE MUTINY COURT MARTIAL 1/20/54 (405 perfs.) by Herman Wouk; with Henry Fonda, Lloyd Nolan, John Hodiak and Charles Nolte.

1955

THE GRAND PRIZE 1/26/55 (21 perfs.) by Ronald Alexander; with Ken Harvey, June Lockhart, Nancy Wickwire, Betsy Palmer and Tom Poston.

THREE FOR TONIGHT 4/6/55 (85 perfs.) by Gower Champion; with Marge and Gower Champion, and Harry Belafonte.

CATCH A STAR 9/6/55 (23 perfs.) by Danny and Neil Simon; with Elaine Dunn, David Burns and Louise Golden.

TIGER AT THE GATES 10/3/55 (217 total perfs.) by Jean Giradoux; with Leueen MacGrath, Michael Redgrave, Leo Ciceri, Morris Carnovsky and Diane Cilento.

JANUS 11/24/55 (251 perfs.) by Carolyn Green; with Margaret Sullavan, Claude Dauphin, Robert Preston, Robert Emhardt and Mary Finney.

1956

A HATFUL OF RAIN 9/10/56 (398 total perfs.) by Michael V. Gazzo; with Shelley Winters, Anthony Franciosa and Ben Gazarra. (Originally opened at the Lyceum Theater 11/9/55.)

THE APPLE CART 10/18/56 (124 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Maurice Evans, Signe Hasso, Charles Carson and Noel Leslie.

1957

A HOLE IN THE HEAD 2/28/57 (156 perfs.) by Arnold Schulman; with Paul Douglas, David Burns, Kay Medford, Tom Pedi, Joyce Van Patton and Lee Grant.

ROMANOFF AND JULIET 10/10/57 (389 perfs.) by Peter Ustinov; with Peter Ustinov, Fred Clark, Natalie Schafer, William Greene and Elizabeth Allen and Jack Gilford.

1958

THE MARRIAGE-GO-ROUND 10/29/58 (431 perfs.) by Leslie Stevens; with Charles Boyer, Caludette Colbert, Julie Newmar and Edmon Ryan.

1960

THE GOOD SOUP 3/2/60 (21 perfs.) by Felicien Marceau; with Ruth Gordon, Sam Levene, Diane Cilento, Mildred Natwick, George S. Irving, Ernest Truex and Lou Antonio.

FROM A TO Z 4/20/60 (21 perfs.) musical revue; with Hermoine Gingold, Stuart Damon, Virginia Vestoff, Alvin Epstein, Paula Stewart, Bob Dishy and Elliott Reid.

IRMA LA DOUCE 9/29/60 (524 perfs.) book and lyrics by Alexandre Breffort, music by Marguerite Monnol; English book and lyrics by Julian More, David Heneker and Monty Norman; with Elizabeth Seal, Keith Michell, Clive Revill, George S. Irving, Stuart Damon, Fred Gwynne and Elliot Gould.

1961

GIDEON 11/9/61 (236 perfs.) by Paddy Chayefsky; with Fredric March, Douglas Campbell, David Hooks and George Segal.

1962

TCHIN-TCHIN 10/25/62 (222 perfs.) by Sydney Michaels; with Margaret Leighton, Anthony Quinn and Charles Grodin.

1963

LORENZO 2/14/63 (4 perfs.) by Jack Richardson; with Alfred Drake, Fritz Weaver, David Opatoshu, Louise Sorel, Robert Drivas and Carmen Mathews.

MY MOTHER, MY FATHER AND ME 3/23/63 (17 perfs.) by Lillian Hellman; with Ruth Gordon, Walter Matthau, Lili Darvas, Helen Martin, Sudie Bond, Anthony Holland, Joe E. Marks and Tom Pedi.

THE BEAST IN ME 5/16/63 (4 perfs.) by James Costigan; with Kaye Ballard, Richard Hayes, Allyn Ann McLerie, Bert Convy, James Costigan and Nancy Haywood.

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING 10/1/63 (151 perfs.) by Arnold Wesker; with John Levitt, George Innes, Michael Standing, Gary Bond and John Noakes.

1964

DYLAN 1/18/64 (273 perfs.) by Sidney Michaels; with Alec Guinness, Kate Reid and James Ray.

CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS 10/6/64 (23 perfs.) by the company; with Tim Brooke-Taylor, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, David Hatch, Jo Kendall, Jonathyn Lynn and Bill Oddie.

SLOW DANCE ON THE KILLING GROUND 11/30/64 (88 perfs.) by William Hanley; with George Rose, Clarence Williams III and Carolan Daniels.

1965

THE ODD COUPLE 3/10/65 (965 total perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Art Carney, Walter Matthau, Nathaniel Frey, John Fiedler, Sidney Armus, Carole Shelley and Monica Evans. (Moved to the Eugene O'Neill Theater 8/1/66.)

1966

THE STAR SPANGLED GIRL 12/21/66 (262 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Anthony Perkins, Richard Benjamin and Connie Stevens.

1967

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY 9/27/67 (5 perfs.) by Bill Naughton; with Maureen O'Sullivan, Marian Hailey, Sudie Bond, Karen Black, Patrick Magee and Tom Atkins.

EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN 11/29/67 (86 perfs.) by Edward Albee; with Barbara Bel Geddes, Barry Nelson, Robert Moore, Beatrice Straight, Mel Dowd and Tom Aldredge.

1968

PLAZA SUITE 2/14/68 (1,097 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with George C. Scott and Maureen Stapleton.

1970

THE GINGERBREAD LADY 12/13/70 (193 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Maureen Stapleton, Michael Lombard, Betsy Von Furstenberg, Ayn Ruymen, Charles Sibert and Alex Colon.

1971

UNLIKELY HEROES 10/26/71 (23 perfs.) by Philip Roth; with Lou Jacobi, David Ackroyd and Michael Tolan.

1972

TWIGS 1/10/72 (312 total perfs.) by George Furth; with Sada Thompson, Conrad Bain and A. Larry Hines. (Originally opened at the Broadhurst Theater 11/14/71.)

THE LINCOLN MASK 10/30/72 (8 perfs.) by V.J. Longhi; with Eva Marie Saint and Fred Gwynne.

1973

FINISHING TOUCHES 2/8/73 (164 perfs.) by Jean Kerr; with Barbara Bel Geddes and Robert Lansing.

GOOD EVENING 11/14/73 (483 perfs.) by Peter Cook and Dudley Moore;with Peter Cook and Dudley Moore.

1974

EQUUS 10/24/74 (781 perfs.) by Peter Shaffer; with Anthony Hopkins, Peter Firth, Marian Seldes, Frances Sternhagen, Michael Higgins and Roberta Maxwell.

1977

OTHERWISE ENGAGED 2/2/77 (309 perfs.) by Simon Gray; with Tom Courtney, John Christopher Jones and Michael Lombard.

THE MERCHANT 11/16/77 (6 perfs.) by Arnold Wesker; with Joseph Leon, John Clements, Julie Garfield, Marien Seldes, Boris Tumarin and Roberta Maxwell.

1978

THE WATER ENGINE and MR.HAPPINESS 3/16/78 (16 perfs.) by David Mamet; with Charles Kimbrough, Patti LuPone and David Sabin.

RUNAWAYS 5/13/78 (274 total perfs.) by Elizabeth Swados. (Originally opened at New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater 2/21/78.)

1979

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN (1604 total perfs.) 1/29/79 by Richard Maltby, Jr.; with Nell Carter, Andre De Shields, Armelia McQueen and Ken Page. (Originally opened at the Longacre Theater 5/9/78; moved to the Belasco Theater 1/26/81.)

1981

PIAF 2/5/81 (165 perfs.) by Pam Gems; with Jane Lapotaire.

THE LIFE & ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY 10/3/81 (102 perfs.) by Charles Dickens; with Roger Rees, Alun Armstrong, David Thoelfall.

1982

THE QUEEN & THE REBELS 9/30/82 (45 perfs.) by Ugo Betti; with Colleen Dewhurst and Peter Micheal Goetz.

1983

PLENTY 1/6/83 (92 perfs.) by David Hare; with Kate Nelligan, Edward Herrmann and Ellen Parker.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU 4/4/83 (312 perfs.) by Moss Hart & George S. Kaufman; with Jason Robards, Elizabeth Wilson.

1984

THE REAL THING 1/5/84 (566 perfs.) by Tom Stoppard; with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons.

1985

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE 9/26/85 (267 perfs.) by Jane Wagner; with Lily Tomlin.

1986

HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES 10/14/86 (176 perfs.) by John Guare; with John Mahoney and Swoosie Kurtz

Plymouth Theater Interior
234-240 West 45th Street
Manhattan

Built: 1916-18
Architect: Herbert J. Krapp

Photo: Forster, LPC

Plymouth Theater Interior

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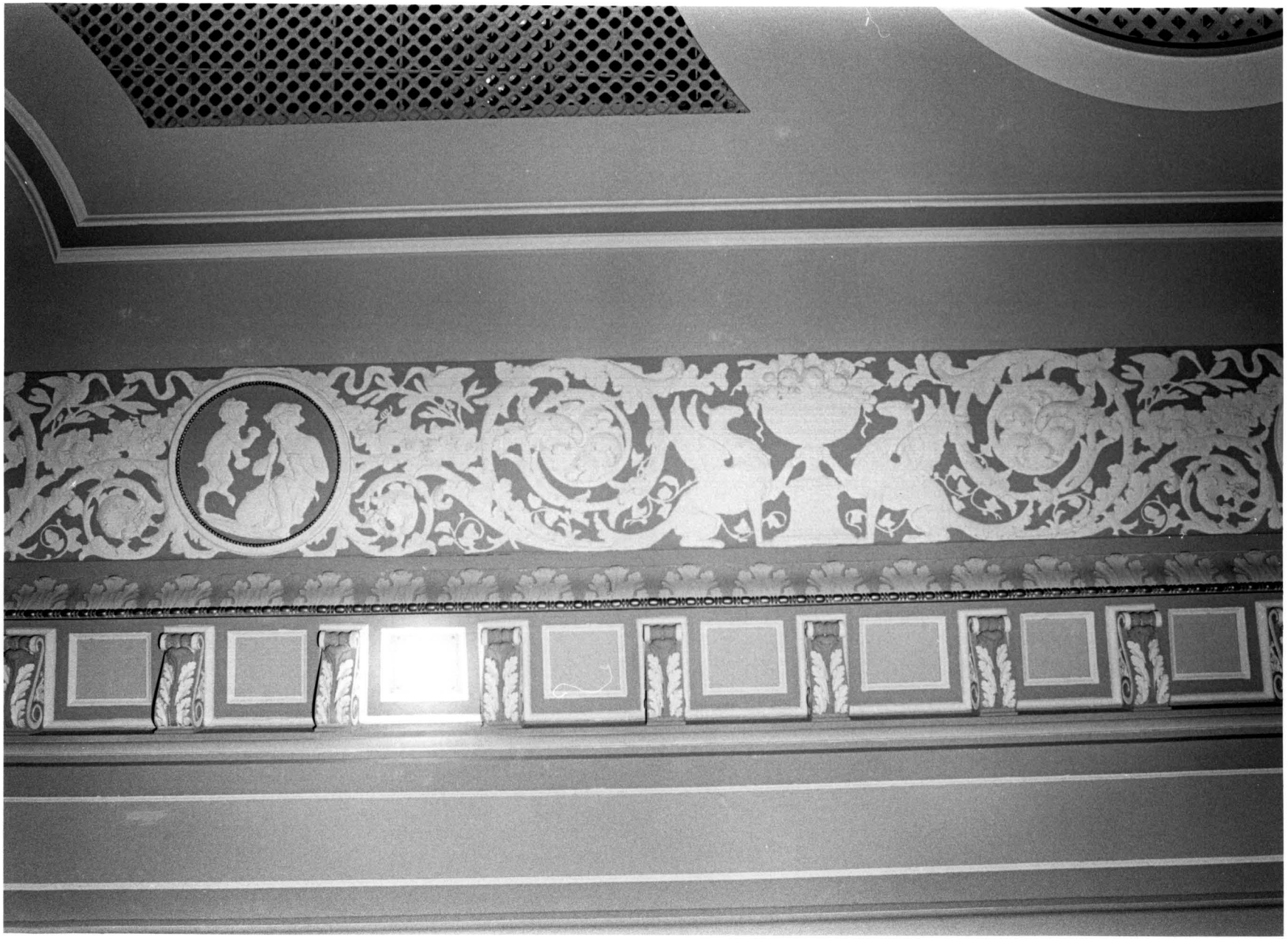

Plymouth Theater Interior
Detail

Photo: Forster, LPC